

WANG MING TAO



on
TEMPTATION . . .

translated by Timothy Tow

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PREFACE

AT the turn of the last century, within two or three years of the outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion (1900), there were born to the Chinese Church three of her most illustrious sons—Wang Ming Tao (1900), John Sung (1901) and Watchman Nee (1903).

John Sung became China's greatest revivalist, having won several thousands souls to Christ, both in China and in Southeast Asia. "A Flame for God in the Far East," his ministry lasted a brief fifteen years from 1928 to 1943. When the Lord took him August 1944 in Beijing (Peking), Wang Ming Tao conducted his funeral service. Today, many of the 80 million Chinese Christians worshipping in house churches are John Sung converts and their descendents and adherents (see "Sword and Trowel," 1988, No. 2, page 13).

Watchman Nee was founder of the "Little Flock" Church movement, and the author of many devotional writings which are translated into English by his western friends. When China was "liberated" by Mao Tse Tong in October 1949, he was among the earliest to be put into prison. He was sentenced to twenty years. The Lord took him on the eve of his release in June 1972. He died a martyr's death.

As for Wang Ming Tao, he served a full twenty-three year term and his wife fifteen years in a different gaol.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.

Wang Ming Tao was released in January 1980. After coming out from "behind iron windows," he and his wife made their home in Shanghai. He lived eleven more years till 1991, "bring[ing] forth fruit in old age" (Ps

92:14). He is acknowledged China's greatest saint and living martyr because no one has stood for the Faith like him, not only under Mao, but also under the Japanese during World War II.

He was sought for an audience by Billy Graham when the latter visited Communist China in the Spring of 1988. As Wang Ming Tao was thrown into prison for standing against the so-called Three-Self (Self-support, Self-government, Self-propagation) Church, his giving audience to Billy Graham, an official guest of the Three-Self Church, was against his will. (The Three-Self Church Movement was started in 1908 by Rev Ting Li Mei [1871–1936], China's first Revivalist, but its good name was usurped by the Communists for their nefarious ends.)

Until his arrest and imprisonment, Wang Ming Tao was pastor of the Christian Tabernacle in Beijing. Six months out of the year, he would minister in other parts of China as a Conference speaker. He edited a quarterly magazine called "Spiritual Food" (零食季刊) which had an unbroken circulation for almost thirty years. His writings are a treasured Christian classic and are being republished in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and translated into English in England and Singapore in recent years. His autobiography, "These Fifty Years" (五十年来), came off the press just as the Communists were overrunning China. It is now given an English dress by Arthur Reynolds, a retired missionary of the China Inland Mission, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in 1986 at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle. Its English title, "A Stone Made Smooth," is published by Mayflower Christian Books and by Christian Life Publishers. It should be read by everyone of this generation.

In order that the reader of his biography might be further blessed by his writings, I have translated six of his essays which are taken from the "Spiritual Food" Quarterly, and also his "Proverbs for Christian Living." I have lumped them together under the title "Wang Ming Tao on Temptation . . ." If by reading his warnings against the many snares and pitfalls Satan has laid for God's children, so that the reader is delivered from them, this little effort of mine will not have been made in vain. Furthermore, it will do the reader good if he is entangled with Charismaticism to further peruse my other publication, "Wang Ming Tao on Charismaticism," obtainable from FEBC Bookroom. Amen.

—*Timothy Tow*

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TAKE CARE OF YOUR EYES

“Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.”
(Proverbs 4:25)

TAKE care of your eyes! Because he who uses his eyes properly will derive many benefits, enjoy many delights. He who uses his eyes improperly will contract many sins and go through many sorrows.

Take care of your eyes! Do not look at those frivolous young men and women. They expose their arms and thighs. They dress seductively to attract attention. They powder themselves white and paint themselves red. They curl their natural, straight-like-a-pen hair into weird shapes. They splash on the apparel perfume offensive to the nerves. Such behaviour is nothing less than to stir up the emotions of the opposite sex, to seduce them to their fallen ways. These are poisonous snakes. To associate with them would end up being bitten. These are snares and traps. Not to avoid them lands you in danger. The first step of their seduction is to attract attention.



Take care of your eyes!

Take care of your eyes. Refrain from those filthy and sexy cinema shows and dances. How many young people who delight in these shows are harmed and brought low. Those filthy and shameful actors glorify their screen work under the name of “Love” and “Beauty dancing.” If at first you do not go to these shows at all, they can do nothing to you. If, however, you do not take care and go for the first time, it will be hard for you to resist going a second time, a third time, yea, even scores and hundreds of times. Your thought-life becomes thus contaminated. Your body becomes tainted with uncleanness. Finally, you fall into a most horrible abyss. Your body and morality will suffer to such an extent so as to be irretrievable.

Take care of your eyes. Do not read those moral-destroying pornographic novels and tabloids. Those who publish them seek to defraud you of your money, never considering how many of their readers' characters and lives would be sacrificed by them. Knowing that young people delight to read sensual materials, these publishers do their utmost to write on things of the flesh. This type of writing increases sales and lines their pockets. Except for those who are determined to suicide, I have never seen any who buys arsenic and eats it. But I have seen many ignoramuses who buy more-poisonous-than-arsenic pornographic novels and tabloids and pore over them night and day. This results in adulterous thoughts filling their minds and a fatal falling away of their moral character. Some end up with display of their shameless, adulterous behaviour while others are taken by evil, harmful habits that destroy the body. How many young people in the prime of life with a bright future have I seen become downcast in spirit, emaciated in body, soiled in character, because of their craving for pornographic literature. Yes, their whole career and happiness are buried in a few filthy books. How pitiful!

Take care of your eyes. Do not look at those nudes in painting that rouse your passions. Have you seen those fly-catcher cardboards? These are thickly smeared with a layer of poisoned honey. When the flies see the honey on the cardboard, they swarm upon it to feed, but the more sweetly they are satiated thereby, the more they go on feeding until they all die on the poison cardboard. Nude drawings are Satan's poison cardboards against mankind. Now if you do not look, that is the end of the matter. Once you look, you will think of looking again. As you look on, it is sweetness to you, but you rarely knew the poison is hidden in the sweetness. Filthy pictures and filthy picture magazines are both injurious to us, and even more injurious than filthy literature.

Take care of your eyes. Make sure a thousand times not to look at these things. Whenever you are accosted by these things, be swift to turn away from them. If it is within your power, destroy them in the fire. Let them be turned to ashes!

LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH

1. Let no man despise you because of your dishonest conduct or exaggeration in speech.
2. Let no man despise you because you are swift to overtake others in profit-making or seek your own advantage while staying with others.
3. Let no man despise you because of your vainglory and eagerness to show off.
4. Let no man despise you because of your jealousy of others' talents and displeasure at others' success.
5. Let no man despise you because of your surreptitious behaviour in meeting and communicating with the opposite sex.
6. Let no man despise you because of your quick and violent temper resulting in frequent quarrels.
7. Let no man despise you because you cringe before the rich while looking down on the poor.
8. Let no man despise you because of your meanness in never giving way to others nor forgetting others's wrongs.
9. Let no man despise you because of your quick promises which are never carried out.
10. Let no man despise you because you do not repay in good time what you have borrowed.
11. Let no man despise you because of your make-up and dress up to seduce.
12. Let no man despise you because of your frivolity and prodigality.

13. Let no man despise you for your wild criticism of others, never uttering a good word of others' merits.
14. Let no man despise you because of your irresponsible speech and responses.
15. Let no man despise you because of ingratitude to your benefactors.
16. Let no man despise you because of your lack of filial piety and brotherly kindness.
17. Let no man despise you because of your laziness, shirking and letting down those who look up to you.
18. Let no man despise you because you take license of your liberty at the expense of others.
19. Let no man despise you because you sponge on others.
20. Let no man despise you because of your smoking, drinking, gambling and other vices.
21. Let no man despise you because of your lawlessness and breaking of rules.
22. Let no man despise you because of your disrespect of elders and disregard of the weak.
23. Let no man despise you because of your speech and behaviour that lose friends and infuriate people.
24. Let no man despise you because you are a busy-body into others' affairs.
25. Let no man despise you because of your dirty looks, dirty body and dirty clothes.
26. Let no man despise you because of your uncouth behaviour and lack of courtesy.
27. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). These words of Paul to young Timothy are also words of God to you!

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MARRIAGE

WE should regard marriage as great as life and death. Then we will not easily talk about love and engagement.

Marriage must be considered: the opposite side must be scrutinised and the opinions of elders, teachers and friends sought. You can do no less. The more important is: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Ps 37:5). "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov 3:5, 6).

See clearly that marriage is not a moment's blessing and happiness. It is a lifetime's blessing or curse, success or failure.

When considering marriage, to put good looks, money, property, power for priority will most likely result in pain, failure and regret.

When a Christian gets engaged, he should consider good character, knowledge, health, talent, and above all, the faith. Devout and God-loving young men and women must seek for a devout, God-loving partner. Else, let them remain single and save themselves from many sorrows.

Marriages that are contracted through beautiful clothes and sweet cosmetics, the cinema and cabaret, theatre and restaurant, etc., will land in divorce and a lifetime of sorrows.

A girl must never marry a heartless divorcee who has discarded his wife. Neither can a man marry a woman who has left her husband. Such persons who either discard wife-of-youth or leave husband will have no compunction to abandon you in future.

Though we do not approve of marriages solely contracted between parents, young people who consult not their fathers and mothers when

choosing life-partners, nor seek the opinion of experienced teachers and friends, much less wait on God; who get engaged on the spur of moment, are faced with extreme danger.

Girls with meticulous make-up and a flair for socialising are the desire of many young men. But few from such a bevy can fill the role of virtuous wife and help-mate to the husband.

Do not rush into an engagement. Often I have observed how when an irreverent young man or woman loves one who loves the Lord, he or she would wear a mask of reverence. Should one react hastily without patient observation, mistaking him or her to be a devout Christian and enter into marriage, one would see the true colours (too late). Imagine the sorrows and great loss consequent to such a decision. The mask of deceit had worked for a season, but would surely be exposed in the end. If young Christians could quietly wait on the Lord before getting engaged and further seek the Lord's guidance, they would not fall into the pit.

Should that young man or woman who desires to be engaged to you meet with a more handsome than you and leave you, you should not feel hurt or despair, but rather rejoice and thank God for deliverance from future danger and sorrow. Such lustful and covetous person can never become your life-partner. Good that she or he had left you in advance that you might not suffer heavier losses. Had you unfortunately got engaged and married, the consequences thereafter could result in untold tragedy. The sorrows you go through would be unimaginable.

When an unmarried couple is uncertain of a resultant marriage, then they should cut down going out together. For should they fall deeper in love without possibility of marriage, they would end up in misery.

Do not fall in love easily with the opposite sex. This is like weaving your own cocoon and tying yourself up.

When a married man or married woman falls for another of the opposite sex, it is adultery in the eyes of God.

When a married man falls for a woman more charming than his wife and deals falsely with his spouse, yea, even taking steps to discard her, and marry the new girl, what do you think his wife-of-youth will feel? Would not she be broken-hearted? Whether she is dead or alive, he would be quite nonchalant. Such a person is of the world's most cruel and evil lot. Let them

hear God's Word: "He hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously" (Mal 2:16). Sooner or later, God will requite with His justice such a ruthless and selfish person.

Whether men would listen to what I say, I must declare loudly the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, . . . committeth adultery" (Matt 19:9).

Some Christians' marriages being contracted by their parents, they are troubled in many things thereby. Unbelievers in such circumstances would seek divorce, but Christians in obeying God's will, pity their ignorant wives and dismiss any thought of divorce and remarriage, in order not to be a stumbling block to others. No doubt they would be sorely tried at home, no doubt their happiness would be curtailed. But, when they stand before God in future, they would surely be rewarded for their love of God and man.

A contented heart, a cottage secure,
A life regulated, a fragrance green,
When all around you is quiet you'll see
That human kindness is diminishing.

The last two lines of this verse are of no little help to questions young people ask about marriage.

To maintain a lasting affection between man and wife and happiness in the home, there are three things most important. First is mutual love. Second is mutual respect. But before these two, of paramount importance is fearing God together.



BE SLOW TO SPEAK

“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”
(James 1:19)

BE slow to speak. In many things, you merely see one side. You have not seen several other sides. In many things, you know only a little bit. You have not known the greater part. If, by the little you see and the bit you know, you speak rashly, you will not escape being ridiculed and lightly esteemed by others. And, when you come to see all sides and know the whole matter, you will also regret what you have rashly said today. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Should you see someone's badness and conclude he is a bad person, you should in fact have discovered the same person has many good points. Sometimes, you might see one with similar good points, and so you think he is a good man, when in fact he has many bad points you have not seen. If you judge a person good or bad by one thing the person has done, will this not result in some bad consequence? Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Sometimes, you hear someone praising another how good he is. In fact, he is not that good. This is a lie deliberately concocted by his supporter, and a wild exaggeration. If you are not careful and join in the praise of that person, you cannot but fall into the pit of a grave error. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Sometimes, you hear someone criticising another how bad he is. In fact, he is not that bad. It is a slander by those who envy him, to destroy his reputation. If you are not careful and join in the slander, you cannot but fall into the sin of reviling others. Moreover, you bring others great injury. Be slow to speak.

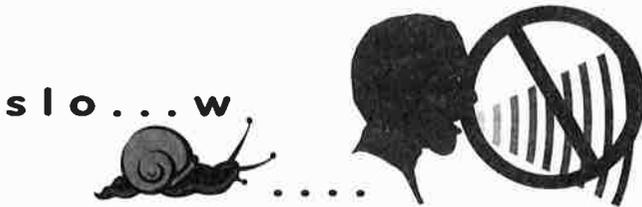
Be slow to speak. What you hear consists of many rumours. Although there are many true facts, these facts have been contaminated when passed

from person to person. Unwittingly, you have become a tale-bearer. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Sometimes, you see someone fail in a certain matter. You never realise how difficult the situation was; neither did you give a thought to establish him, nor did you consider your own weaknesses. So you ridicule and judge him. You might further add words to the effect that you, in such a circumstance, would not result in failure. Now, when such a situation confronts you one day, and you fail likewise, how you would lose face and find no place to hide. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Sometimes, you are invited to do something. Without considering whether you can do it, you loudly undertake to do it. But when the time comes and you cannot do as you promised, would you not cause great hardship and despair? Moreover, you are guilty of a breach of trust. You hurt others and hurt yourself. What a miscalculation! Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Sometimes, you chance to meet a person. In the course of a little conversation, you think he is an honest person, loving God and man. You take him for a bosom friend, and you reveal your secrets to him. After a while, you find out he is a cunning, dangerous, selfish person. He wanted to know your secrets in order to use you. How you would regret over such a great loss! Be slow to speak.



Be slow to speak. Sometimes, your friend may say or do something unwittingly that hurts your feelings. On his part, he has not the slightest ill will. On your part, you misunderstand him to take you to task deliberately. So you speak words that cause him much embarrassment. Later, when you discover your friend bears you no ill will, will you not feel you have offended your friend? Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Sometimes, in a conversation with your friend, you are aroused to refute him after a few words. The fact is if you will quietly listen to all he has to say, you might agree with him totally. Often have I seen such foolish people, with no patience to let others speak on, who jump up in confrontation and opposition. This is a most foolish act. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Sometimes, you want to do something. Well and good, go and do it with all your might. But, do not tell others about it, if there is no necessity to do so. When you succeed, that is best. If, unfortunately, you failed, you would not invite ridicule anyway. Should you rashly announce beforehand anything you wanted to do, but failed to carry out, you are sure to become a laughing stock. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. When angry, you are quick to say words you should not say. When the anger has subsided, you regret your misplaced words. To avoid this, why not be slow to speak to begin with? Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. When you are elated with happiness, it is most likely that, without thinking twice, you would blurt out—to your own detriment! Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. “Sickness enters by the mouth. By the mouth trouble exits.” Eat slowly to avoid sickness. Speak slowly to avoid trouble. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Do not forget that whatever you say is of great concern to God’s glory, others’ hurt and your own character. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. Satan will tempt you in your speech. Evil men will trap you in your speech. The knowledgeable will judge you by your speech. All around you derive either good or bad from your speech. Be slow to speak.

Be slow to speak. God knows all our weak points and the cause of our failures. So He teaches us in His Word, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.”

CHRISTIAN, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

THE end of all things is at hand. False prophets are increasing with the days in the Church. Many who do not take care are led astray. Some lose all their faith. Others fall away from the pure Gospel. These imbibe an extra-Biblical doctrine. When the leader is blind, his followers cannot but fall into sorrows. Christian, take care of yourself!

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim 6:10). We have seen—north, east, south, west—how many Christians have fallen into bitter sorrows because of this love of money. Christian, take care of yourself!

Promiscuous love, lasciviousness and fornication, these hurt body and destroy virtue, and bring great harm to the family. In the annals of both secular and sacred history, and from our daily observations, countless people are fallen into the abyss of multiple sorrows. Christian, take care of yourself!

A little spark can burn up a prairie. A wrong decision can bring irremediable results. Many great crimes come from a little greed, a little adulterous desire, a little envy, a little pride, a little selfishness, lurking in the heart. How did you know a little evil desire could cause a man to perpetrate such terrible crime? Hurting others, hurting oneself! Christian, take care of yourself!

Some who rely on their cleverness commit fraud and lying for name and wealth. These may profit for a short season, whereby they become the bolder in their transgression. When their lies are eventually exposed and their tricks laid bare, their credibility becomes bankrupt, their repute swept away, they find themselves cursed of God and deserted by man. They who cheat others cheat themselves. Christian, take care of yourself!

“Because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8). Because of a moment’s slumber and drowsiness in certain matters, many Christians are brought to grief. Christian, take care of yourself!

When a Christian is most fervent in spirit and is at the zenith of virtuous deeds, when he is most diligent in God’s service, more often than not, he commits the great sin of pride! Christian, take care of yourself!

An angler must put bait on his hook in order to catch fish. Satan uses money, fame, food, clothes, friends, love-passion, revelry for a bait to Christians. Many Christians who lust after this bait are hooked. Christian, take care of yourself!

A passing word from the mouth is a little matter. But we see how many who for a little word from the mouth bring disaster. They hurt others and hurt themselves. “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (Prov 10:19). Christian, take care of yourself!

A Christian who fears men will fall into Satan’s trap, to do things not pleasing to God. For fearing the Philistine troops, King Saul waited not for Samuel but took into his own hands to perform the sacrifice, for which he entertained God’s wrath (see 1 Samuel 13). Peter, for fearing the mail-fist of the Jews, denied his Lord thrice with an oath (Matt 26:69–75). “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prov 29:25). Christian, take care of yourself!

Have you seen many fallen Christians? How pitiful is their plight! They are laid low in their conduct, so unclean! How sorrowful is their daily life. When you see them, you cannot but sigh for them. But how this: Some of them had been mightily used, had lived a good life. Owing to carelessness, they have fallen to such a place. Christian, take care of yourself!

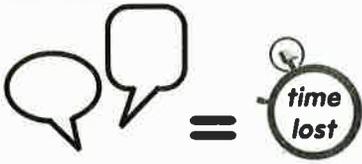
TREASURE TIME!

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:16)
“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.”
(Colossians 4:5)

TREASURE time. There are many lessons in life to learn, and many things to be done. Should we labour day and night, we would not be able to learn what we ought and to finish the things we ought to finish. How dare we spend time carelessly, wastefully? Treasure time!

Treasure time. Do not waste precious time in chit-chatting. This is a common malady, most despicable. To discuss a problem of value whereby we polish one another’s knowledge of the Scriptures or of some academic

idle talk:



subject, is no idle talk of course. Idle talk brings no benefit either to our faith or character, nor to our knowledge and work. To ramble along without any objective and without limit wears away a lot of time. It ties up proper work. This is a common malady, and more so with those who like

to prattle. Let us take heed to do away with this bad habit by exhorting and supervising one another. Those who fail in this matter can never attain to anything. Treasure time.

Treasure time. Do not waste time on novels that entice you. Generally, most people like to read novels. If we have time on hand, let us use our leisure reading up on religion, ethics, education, history and those novels that edify our character. In these, we can find something good. But let us flee those that purvey immorality and violence, that speak of weird things, that are not only of no value but are injurious to the reader. Take your eyes off them! Do not read novels that have some value but so take up one’s time as to hinder proper work. Treasure time.

Treasure time. Do not play overtime. After work, take up some game or exercise, that is not hurtful to the body, for recreation. That is in order to recover from fatigue. Such relaxation is essential. But, if we are immersed in these things at the expense of time and work, how pitiful! Do not spend too much time in exercise, such as playing ball. Do not spend too much time on music or on chess. Let there be a limit of one or two hours for such recreation. When on vacation, this limit might be stretched a little. At any rate, let there be a cut-off point. Let not anyone be so engrossed in these recreations as to hinder proper work. Treasure time.

Treasure time. Do not patronise any crowded places unless it is necessary or for the sake of buying something. The things you find there play on your senses. They glue you down, and dissipate your time. They drag you into the world and away from God. Do not go there lest you fall into temptation. If you treasure time, do not go!

Treasure time. Keeping birds and fish, nurturing flowers and trees, collecting antiques, are hobbies not absolutely forbidden to Christians. To have such recreations as give restfulness to the body and take away fatigue is not without benefit. But, if one has to spend much time and money on these things, then it becomes a loss. Never waste large sums of money on these things. The money God has entrusted to you is not to be used on these things, neither your time. To live is to work for God, not to play for your own sake. Treasure time.

Treasure time. Do not sleep beyond your bodily needs. For some adults, seven hours, more or less, is enough. Ordinarily, it is eight hours. Those who are weak might need nine to ten hours (this does not include the children or the sick). Oversleeping is a waste of time. The lazy bones who like to slumber should cut down. Treasure time.

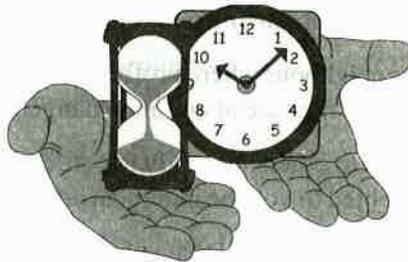
Treasure time. No matter how busy, cease not to pray and read the Bible. To stop these two exercises, our spirits become dried up. Our spiritual growth is retarded to our great loss. Except for official business or some unavoidable matter, do "not [forsake] the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb 10:25). When a Christian neglects these things, he begins to backslide. Treasure time.

Treasure time. Everyday, whether at home or at work, finish up everything that is to be done. Do not say, Tomorrow! Do not shirk your work

over to another. Do not fight shy of responsibility. Do not be afraid of work. The more the work, the stronger the muscles. The more trading of your talents, the more your gain of experience. Although you could not do it at first, if you are a willing worker, you will succeed in the end. The unwilling worker, though talented, will be laid on the shelf. "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt 25:29).

Treasure time. Apart from diligently fulfilling our duties each day, we need to take time to read. Read books on the Christian faith and on good character, books helpful to your work and knowledge. We have no opportunity to meet personally the saints whom God has mightily blessed to be taught by them, nor have we the resources to employ the learned and experienced to be our teachers. But, we can learn from them through their books. Apart from reading, let us learn from the people we meet each day, and add to our knowledge from every experience. Each day we live on earth is a day in the school of life. Treasure time.

Treasure TIME!



PROVERBS FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Fearing God is the foundation of life.
Loving neighbour is the way of living.

Be very sincere in dealing with others.
Be very severe in regulating yourself.

When in poverty, do not cringe.
When in prosperity, be not proud.

Never harbour a spirit of jealousy.
Rejoice with them in prosperity.

Rejoice not at the misfortunes of others.
When others are down, share their troubles.

Don't overtake your neighbour where profit lies ahead.
Don't step backwards in the face of common danger.

When you're indebted to others, be ready to confess and redress.
When others are indebted to you, be indulgent and forgiving.

When doing good to others, regard that your duty.
When others do good to you, recognise it is by their grace.

Let not any wealth that goes through you,
whether big or small, soil your palm.

In making friends with members of either sex,
be proper and open.

Do not promise easily.
Having promised, be diligent to fulfil.

Do not borrow at random.
Pay back quickly any loan.

Respect your elders, and elders of others.
Love your children, and children of others.

Let the strong points in others become a pattern to you.
Let the weak points in others be a warning.

Control your temper: be not easily provoked to anger.
Guard your lips; and be slow to speak.

Do not spread any unfounded report.
Do not do anything that fears exposure.

Do not covet the wealth you see in others.
Do not look on with folded arms when others fall.

Bow not nor fawn before people.
Speak no evil behind others' backs.

Be diligent and loyal in serving others,
True and straightforward in your transactions.

Hate evil like snakes and scorpions.
Love neighbours like rare treasures.

Rather lose money than trustworthiness.
Rather lose your life than self-control.

Do not cover up your mistakes,
Nor boast at all of your virtues.

Be always courteous in speech and conduct.
Be always neat and tidy in apparel.

Do not provoke others to hate you,
Nor speak words that irk your hearers.

Absolutely no smoking, no drinking, no gambling,
Taboo to all seductive make-up.

Think always for the good of others.
Wherever you go, seek God's glory.



SPIRITUAL LIFE THERMOMETER

HEALTHY SPIRITUAL LIFE

1. Fervent in prayer.
2. Bible-reading tasteful.
3. Fully trusting.
4. Loving God more than everything else.
5. Resisting and hating sin.
6. Giving God the glory in all things.
7. Fully at peace.
8. Giving thanks in all things.
9. Always happy and singing.
10. Peaceful and patient in trouble.
11. Much consideration of others.
12. Seeking God's pleasure in all things.
13. Yearning for spiritual things in the heart.
14. Speaking words that edify others.
15. Happy to witness for Christ.
16. Cheerful to give to the Lord's work.
17. Rejoicing in others' good success.
18. A helping hand to those in trouble.
19. Willing to forgive others.
20. Character first.
21. Happy to keep close to devout Christians.
22. Happy to hear faithful admonition.
23. Thirstily hoping for the Lord's return.



SPIRITUAL LIFE THERMOMETER

UNHEALTHY SPIRITUAL LIFE

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1. Lethargic in prayer.
 2. Bible-reading insipid.
 3. Anxious and doubting.
 4. Loving worldly things more than the Lord.
 5. Compromising with sin.
 6. Seeking self-glory in everything.
 7. Much worrying.
 8. Much murmuring.
 9. Always sad and sighing.
 10. Easily provoked to anger.
 11. Much consideration of self.
 12. Seeking men's pleasure in all things.
 13. Coveting earthly things in the heart.
 14. Speaking words that criticise others.
 15. No power to witness.
 16. Stingy and unwilling to give.
 17. Jealous of others' good success.
 18. Nonchalant at others' misfortune.
 19. Not willing to forgive others.
 20. Clothing first.
 21. Happy in the company of worldly friends.
 22. Happy to hear words of flattery.
 23. No thought of things touching the Lord's return.

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLE

THE NEED OF DISCERNMENT

DURING the last couple of years, many Christians in Shantung Province have been seeking the charismatic gifts. What they say about the charismatic gifts are special experiences, such as dreams and visions, speaking in tongues, prostrating on the ground and getting caught up to heaven, healing by prayer, etc. Many Christians in many places have indeed experienced these phenomena and so are paying more attention to them. Preachers are preaching on these things wherever they go. Many who have experienced these things vie with one another for pre-eminence. Wherever they go, they testify to these supposedly special gifts, and exhort others to seek the same.

Recently, I have been asked by many Christians whether to believe such things and to seek such experiences. Hence, this article, briefly, to answer these questions.

The Charismatic Movement that has come during these two years is not new to me. But there are those earnest seekers who, upon hearing this kind of doctrine, are taken in without giving a thought. Then there are many who oppose this doctrine, who upon hearing the same would shut up. All they do is stand on the side and criticise. I consider either attitude wrong. I recognise that among those who seek charismatic gifts, there are many sincere and God-loving people; and I really love them. But in regard to these strange experiences that they emphasise in preaching, I must give judgment in the light of Holy Scripture [Note: This Charismatic Movement took place about 1932-33].

CHARISMATIC GIFTS IN THE LIGHT OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

First, let us acknowledge that dreams, visions, speaking in tongues, prostrating on the ground, getting caught up to heaven, healing by prayer are experiences recorded in the Bible of the early Christians. If God sees there is a need of such things today, He can bestow them on Christians, as He did to the ancients. Therefore, if any should say these things are impossible today, I would take exception. Unless God's power has been so reduced as not to match that which was manifested in ancient times, otherwise, who can say God cannot do what He did before?

Thus, shall we seek dreams, visions, speaking in tongues, prostrating on the ground, getting caught up to heaven, healing by prayer and such experiences? Never! Let us take note, the saints mentioned in the Bible had never sought such things. These special experiences were bestowed by God on special occasions, for special reasons. They did not experience these things all the time.

In recent days, those who seek charismatic gifts, whenever they come to a meeting, would stand up to testify. Among the witnesses are many dreamers who after telling their dreams would also interpret, and there are times when others would interpret for them. Sometimes two or three persons would interpret the dream of one person, but with two or three different meanings. Some of the dreams by these dreamers are totally devoid of meaning, yet they will somehow arrive at some interpretation. For this cause, we seldom hear of preaching, but as to testimonies, there are lots of them. Many dreamers have dreams to tell and interpret, but I could not for one moment ask them what their dreams are or what significance they bring. By comparing with the dreams of the saints of old recorded in the Bible, we can see that their frequent dreams and constant interpretation of dreams in their daily meetings, are a mistake.

First of all, let us look at the dreams recorded in the Old Testament. Jacob in the desert saw a ladder that reached up to heaven. Here went up and down the angels of God and the Lord also appeared to him (Gen 28:10–17). Joseph had dreamed two wonderful dreams in his home (Gen 37:5–11). When he was cast into prison, he interpreted the dreams of the Butler and the Baker (Gen 40:1–23). After this, he gave interpretation to Pharaoh's twin dreams,

which raised him to prime minister of Egypt (Gen 41). King Solomon asked God for wisdom in his dream and was commended of the Lord (1 Kgs 3:4–15). On two occasions, the prophet Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (Dan 2:14–45; 4:4–27). As for himself, Daniel had also dreamed (Dan 7). Take note that these dreams are God-given on special occasions, for special purposes. Many personages are recorded in the Old Testament, but those who dreamed are limited to a few. As to those few who had dreamed, they did not dream but once or twice in their lifetime. They were quite different from today's seekers of charismatic gifts, who include many dreamers among them. And as to those who have dreams all the time, they treat them no more than their home-cooked meals.

Let us now turn again to the New Testament and look at the dreams that are recorded therein: Matthew chapter 1 and 2 record Mary's husband Joseph having dreamed three times. In the first dream, an angel told him to marry Mary his wife. In the second dream, the angel told Joseph to escape with Mary and the Infant Jesus to Egypt. On the third occasion, the angel told him to return with them to Judea. Matthew chapter 2 records how the wise men were told in a dream not to return to Herod. Let us notice that the dreams recorded here refer to a special time wherein God would do a special work. Moreover these dreams were clearly instructive to the dreamer himself. If I should tell you that Joseph, in his carpenter shop, has a dream every night, and would tell it to Mary his wife the next morning at the breakfast table, and (if I should tell you) the wise men from the East came to Bethlehem and upon their return they would each dream a dream every night in the tent they pitched in the desert, and would tell one another their dreams while riding camel-back and interpret one another's dreams, would you believe me?

Furthermore, let us take a careful look at all the dreams recorded in both Old and New Testaments. We see that these dreams clearly and lucidly reveal some future event or instruct men on some important promise or command. Such dreams are mighty different from our ordinary dreams. We can see this difference at one look. Should we think of an interpretation for every dream and force our interpretation upon it so that it attains to the category of rare dreams, that it is a charismatic gift; then we should not seek after such. Those who dream often in the night have already obtained this sort of charismatic gift, this sort of dream! Those who do not seek after charismatic gifts who dream this sort of dream, should they tell it to others, they would

laugh them to scorn, according to the saying, “These are the dreams of fools.” They would pay no attention in the least to their dreams. But when those who seek after charismatic gifts dream and would relate their dreams before the Church, people would say they are “giving a testimony.” When we turn over their dreams again and again to draw some far-fetched meaning, then these would be declared rare dreams. How ludicrous!

In regard to visions, we find not a few recorded in the Old Testament. We have also no time to draw upon their testimony. In so far as the New Testament is concerned, there is one Zacharias who saw an angel appear to him in the Temple. The angel told him that his wife Elizabeth, though advanced in years, would conceive and bear a son. Then, there is the Virgin Mary who saw an angel appear before her, who told her she would conceive and bear a son and call his name Jesus (Luke 1). The Acts of the Apostles records how before Stephen was stoned to death, he saw “the heavens opened” and the Son of Man standing on God’s right hand (Acts 7:55, 56). Saul was dazzled by a great light outside of Damascus City, whereupon he heard Jesus calling him (Acts 9:3–9). Ananias was sent by the Lord in a vision to see Saul (Acts 9:10–16). In a vision, Cornelius saw an angel who told him to invite Peter to preach the Gospel to him (Acts 10:1–8). When Peter saw in a vision a certain vessel like a great sheet knit at the four corners descending to the earth wherein were all kinds of animals, he heard a voice calling him to kill and eat (Acts 10:13). At Troas, Paul saw in a vision a man of Macedonia standing and entreating him to cross over Macedonia to help them (Acts 16:9, 10). When Paul was labouring in Corinth, he was persecuted by unbelievers. One night, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9, 10). When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, the Lord stood by his side one night and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11). On his way under arrest to Rome, Paul braced the dangers of wind and wave. An angel of the Lord stood by him in the night and said, “Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (Acts 27:23, 24).

Let us take note that these passages tell us that in a special situation where there was a special need, God would give a vision to man. Seeing

visions is not an usual occurrence. It is an unusual occurrence. Unless there is an unusual situation and a special need, God would not give man a vision. During the days of the Apostles, the Church had just sprouted. The dangers and troubles they had to go through were ten times, yea, a hundred times, more than what we have experienced. They had not the Bible we now have to guide them. In spite of these circumstances, neither did God give them visions and visions. Of the twelve Apostles, Peter their leader was used most greatly by the Lord. His acts recorded in the Bible exceeded those of the rest of the Apostles. But the Bible records only once his seeing a vision, and that vision was given under special circumstances, to meet a special need. Were it not for this vision, Peter might not, under any circumstance, be willing to go to Cornelius's house. Had he been willing, he could not have avoided the opposition and obstruction of believing Jews. Thus, the vision given Peter was not only indispensable to him, but also to the Jewish believers. Paul was the specially chosen Apostle to the Gentiles and the miraculous acts of Paul exceeded those of the other Apostles put together, but the visions given him were but few, and each vision was a special direction from God. He needed these directions at those times, and these visions spelled out clearly what those things were to him.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN MAN'S WILL AND BIBLE TRUTH

Nowadays, there are believers of a certain region who seek the charismatic gifts, so that they would see bright light or dim light, and there are others who see the cross or the shape of a man. Some see Heaven's door opened and what people have entered and what people could not enter. Some see tables full of good food and rare dishes. Some see so-and-so carrying a big burden of sin on his back, and so-and-so suffering in the flames and all kinds of happenings not recorded in the Bible. Let me ask: Who among the Apostles of old and among the Christians of those times ever saw such visions? Let me ask again: What is the meaning of these visions? Let me ask furthermore: Why is there a need for God to give such visions? By comparing these visions with the visions recorded in the Bible, we can differentiate between the two for what they are worth.

Those believers who seek the charismatic gifts often talk about getting caught up to heaven. Sometimes these people prostrate on the ground, a good

many times unconscious. When they wake up, they claim to have been caught up to heaven. Sometimes, they are caught up to heaven when they pray individually, or corporately, at prayer meetings. Then they describe how they saw the glories of heaven, or how they saw the face of the Lord or how they ate the fruits of heaven, or how in heaven they saw so-and-so. Yea, even what wonderful, beautiful things, and what beautiful songs so pleasant to the ear, what rapturous music! Sometimes they state even seeing so-and-so being received by the Lord to enter in, and so-and-so rejected, and many other astonishing accounts. Many desire to know whether these rapturous happenings are reliable and what after all are these experiences. Let me comment on these things in the light of Holy Scripture.

As to being “caught up to heaven,” there is only one instance recorded in the Bible. It is found in 2 Corinthians 12. There Paul writes this passage to the Corinthian Church:

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities (2 Cor 12:1-5).

This is the one and only instance of one caught up to heaven recorded in the whole Bible. If we study carefully this passage, we can see that such rapturous experience is very, very rare. It is not the experience of any other person; it is worthy of the individual’s boast. At the same time, let us notice that Paul did not say explicitly who actually was this person caught up. One thing that deserves our particular attention is that Paul merely refers to “a man in Christ” being caught up to paradise, but he says nothing about what he saw or what he heard, and moves on to say that that man “heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful . . . to utter.” Take note that it is not that he did not hear anything, but that “he heard unspeakable words.” Furthermore, he did not say, these words are what “man cannot say.”

Let us compare the experiences of those seeking charismatic gifts with the doctrine in the Bible and see what it is like. The whole Bible relates but

once concerning a man who was caught up. But today among these seeking charismatic gifts, there are many who get caught up all the time. Now, when Paul mentioned the man who was caught up, he did not name him, but said merely, “a man in Christ,” whereas these seeking charismatic gifts today vie with one another to testify: “I was caught up thus and thus to heaven.” Paul says, “A man in Christ [was] caught up to the third heaven. . . . and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” But those who seek charismatic gifts vie with each other to tell of what visions they have seen in heaven, what voices they have heard, and some even openly claim to have received certain directives from heaven, yea, even God’s Word to be declared to men. If we should slide into this rut, in no time we could write a new appendage to the New Testament. How dangerous is this trend!

These seeking charismatic gifts often prostrate on the ground. No doubt, the Bible also records several prostrations on the ground, of saints seeing a vision. The prophet Ezekiel prostrated on the ground when he saw the glory of Jehovah (Ezek 1:26–28). The prophet Daniel tremblingly prostrated on the ground when he saw Gabriel appear before him (Dan 8:15–18). On another occasion when he had mourned three full weeks and saw a vision, he fell into a deep sleep with his face to the ground (Dan 10:1–9). On the outskirts of Damascus, when Saul saw a great light shine upon him, he also fell to the ground (Acts 9:1–9). John, on Patmos Island, saw the Lord Jesus appear before him, and when he saw Him, he fell before His feet like one dead (Rev 1:12–18). Take note that the aforesaid saints of ancient days prostrated on the ground because they saw what human eyes had not seen, of the glory of those who appeared to them. They did not prostrate on the ground every now and then with no particular reason, or when in prayer; nor did they fall to the ground all of a sudden without seeing anything. Let me ask those charismatic gifts seekers whether they had seen God’s glory so that they were prostrated to the ground through fear, like these saints of ancient days?

ON TONGUES

Now, we come to the matter of speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is also experienced by the disciples of ancient times. The Bible tells us the first time that people had gone through this experience were the Apostles and a number of other disciples. It happened on Pentecost Day after Jesus’

Ascension to heaven. At that time, they were filled with the Holy Ghost and they preached in other languages. As a result, several thousand repented and turned to Christ (Acts 2). After this, when Peter preached in the house of Cornelius, centurion of the Italian Band, the Holy Spirit fell upon the hearers who were Gentiles, and they spoke with tongues and magnified God (Acts 10:46). Apart from these two instances, there is another also recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, i.e., Paul's encounter with the twelve disciples baptised after John the Baptist. When Paul baptised them in the Name of the Lord Jesus and laid his hands upon their heads, the Holy Spirit fell upon their bodies and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:1–7). The Gospel began to be published during the age of the Apostles and the Holy Spirit began to come upon them as the Gentiles first heard the Gospel. The Church was beginning to be established. So God, for the sake of man, had to perform supernatural acts to authenticate His Gospel and promises. In the face of those who disbelieved Him, He wrought by the hands of the Apostles signs and wonders: the lame walked (Acts 3:1–10; 14:8–10); the paralytic got up (Acts 9:32–35), unclean spirits were cast out (Acts 5:16; 16:16–18); the sick were healed (Acts 5:15, 16); and to the extent that sinning Christians at the Apostle's rebuke fell down dead (Acts 5:1–11); while dead Christians, when they heard the Apostle's voice, rose up immediately (Acts 9:36–43). In order to confirm His promises on believers, He gave them the ability to speak in tongues upon receiving the Holy Spirit, that they might know for sure the Holy Spirit was given them because they believed.

How about the present day? There are many proofs that authenticate the Gospel and there are many events to authenticate the promises of God. These supernatural events, signs and wonders and speaking in tongues, etc., are no more in urgent need today as in the days of the Apostles. If God should bestow them on us, we would logically receive them thankfully. If God would not that we receive them, we should not yearn or seek after them. We believe God's Word and God's Promises. Let us not be like the Jews who sought after miracles, for God's Word is all that we need to believe.

Apart from a few passages on tongues in the Acts of the Apostles, there are Paul's references in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. He does not forbid tongues, but he exhorts believers to seek after the most important and most useful of gifts—to prophesy and preach. Now, the charismatic gifts seekers, after speaking in tongues, have neglected the gifts of prophesying and preaching. They major on minors.

There is a more serious question, and that is those who seek after the charismatic gifts argue that because tongues were present as a sign in the several instances of believers receiving the Holy Spirit in Acts, therefore those who receive the Holy Spirit today must also have tongues for a sign. Those who have never spoken in tongues have not received the Holy Spirit. Such argument is most arbitrary! Whether ancient or modern, there have been a great many who are saved, devout and God-loving, and there are a great many dedicated workers mightily used of God who have never spoken in tongues. Does that mean these have not received the Holy Spirit? I would not in the least dare to make such a pronouncement. I would not have effrontery to sin against God. I have said above that miracles and tongues were greatly and effectually needed in the primitive church, but today it is totally different from that period. If we say Christians who do not speak in tongues, as experienced and recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, have not received the Holy Spirit, then we can also say that preachers who do not have the power of the Apostles in working miracles as recorded in Acts, have not been used of God to preach the Gospel. For the Acts of the Apostles record that those who preached in the days of the Apostles, whether Peter or John, Stephen or Philip, and whether Paul, they all performed signs and wonders. Also it is recorded in Mark 16:20, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." Do you believe really that preachers today who cannot work miracles like the Apostles are not used of God? If that is your belief of those workers God mightily used from ancient days to modern times in both Eastern and Western hemispheres who have taught many believers, who have led many to Christ, who have witnessed a good confession to the Gospel; let me ask, how many of them have done many signs and wonders like the preachers recorded in Acts? You mean to say God has not used these people? Who dare say such things to blaspheme God? If this is true, leaving others aside, let me ask how many of those preachers who advocate tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit are used of the Lord? I think if I should say: "Those preachers who cannot work miracles are not used of God," even those charismatic gifts seekers who stress on tongues would not agree with me. That being the case, why do they say that those who have not spoken in tongues have not received the Holy Spirit?

Now they say that wherever it is recorded in Acts of those who received the Holy Spirit tongues were mentioned. At Pentecost, the Apostles received

the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues, and the members of Cornelius's household, having received the Holy Spirit spoke in tongues. The twelve disciples at Ephesus having received the Holy Spirit also spoke in tongues. The believers of Samaria received the Holy Spirit. Although the Bible does not record their speaking in tongues, yet they must also have spoken, for it is recorded, "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:18, 19). Since Simon could see the coming down of the Holy Spirit, there must have been certain visible signs. Those visible signs must have been the speaking of tongues. Yes, I also believe that on those several occasions, those who received the Holy Spirit had spoken in tongues. But can this therefore prove that those who have not spoken in tongues have not received the Holy Spirit? If this is the case and Acts records that preachers are also miracle workers, why do they not say those who cannot work miracles are not used of God? They strenuously advocate the former but as to the latter they say not a word. Is this logical? I believe the Holy Spirit today can open men's mouths and cause them to speak in tongues, and I believe also God today can use men's hands to work miracles and wonders, but I do not believe God today must require everyone who receive the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues. Nor do I believe God requires every preacher of the Gospel to work miracles. Whether they can is one thing. Whether they must is another matter. These two situations must not be confused together.

Seekers of the charismatic gifts often use a verse of Scripture to defend the Word they preach. They say, "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8). What we did in ancient times, that we do today as well. Yes, I believe a hundred percent that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, but I do not believe that Jesus does the same thing yesterday, today and forever. There was a time when Jesus Christ was with the Father in the same glory, and there was a time when He humbled Himself to be the Son of Man and become a servant. But now, He is on God's right hand to intercede for us. There is a day when He will descend from heaven to take us back to Himself. Furthermore, there is a time when He will judge the living and the dead, and become the King of the World. Let me ask if these facts are in contradiction with "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever"? To believe firmly in the Bible is a very

excellent thing, but if Bible-believers interpret the Bible inaccurately, that will be a great danger indeed!

ON HEALING

Finally, let us discuss healing by prayer. During the days of the Apostles, God manifested His mighty power by the Apostles and by those who preached the Gospel, to heal many sick people. Of course God can do the same today, but facts tell us God does not do this today. Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Bunyan, Whitefield, Moody, Spurgeon, Meyer and thousands and hundreds of well-known and not well-known Gospel messengers are greatly used of God, both east and west. These have led thousands and ten-thousands of sinners to the Lord and have taught and nurtured many of God's people to fight the good fight of faith. But they have not wrought great miracles like the Apostles, nor have they healed many people. I believe that God had not wrought miracles through them not because God cannot do them, nor is it due to their lack of faith, nor because they are not clean enough, nor because they are not fully obedient, but because there is no such need. I am not arbitrary in so saying, for though they have not wrought miracles or healed, they had led many to Christ. They have done great works, which should substantiate what I say.

Do we have healing by prayer today? I can reply with an emphatic "yes." I have heard testimonies and I have seen with mine own eyes such events. I believe God can hear men's prayers and heal sicknesses. And I believe God often does. But I do not believe that every Christian will get an answer when he prays for the sick. Nor do I believe every sick person can be healed by prayer. There are those who will say, those who are not healed by prayer have no faith, or not enough of faith. No doubt, there are those who lack faith, so they cannot see the glory of God. But there are others who are not healed by prayer not because they lack faith, but because their prayer is not in God's will. In other words, it is God's will that their sickness should go through its appointed time before they can be healed. Maybe, it is not the Lord's will that they be healed but that their sickness will result firstly in their leaving this world.

Someone might ask, "Is it God's will for His own to get sick for a long time?" My reply is, "Yes." Many times believers get sick and that is exactly according to God's will. Some Christians love the world and are

contaminated. God calls them but they do not heed. God warns them but they do not repent. God cannot help but chastise them with illness in order to turn them back. For they would not repent and confess their sins though their illness was slight and their disease of short duration. Should God listen to their prayer and the intercession of others at this juncture, would not His plan have failed? Should not a little child be shut inside a dark room away from the breakfast table for disobeying his father, before he repents and confesses his sin? No matter how he or others plead for clemency, his father can in no way let him out for breakfast. This chastisement is not due to his father's cruelty, but rather to his love. Oftentimes this is how God also deals with His children. Those who advocate healing by prayer must surely support my words. They advocate that the sick must confess their sins, and they declare that once the sick have confessed their sins they will be healed. Why should there be any prolonged illness? Little do they realise that many sins are not that easy to confess and repent from. Often we hear people confess such sins as lying, anger, assault, hatred, adultery, theft, and other sins known to most people and easy to repent from. Such sins are acknowledged and repented from after one has gone through a little pain after two days of serious illness. But there are sins greater and deeper that come not under this category, viz., following one's self-will against following God's will, deviating from God's direction, putting up a pious front of loving God but hiding deep within a covetousness for the world, pride and conceit, robbing God's glory, looking to man and not to God. Besides these, there are many of this type that are not easily repented from. Before one can recognise such sin and repent from it, one has to go through most severe and most long-drawn chastisement. This cannot be measured in days or months, but sometimes years. Many who have experienced this chastisement can understand these things. They can say how their spirits are healed after they have suffered for a long time in the flesh.

But when God suffers His children to become ill for a long time, it is not always with the view of chastising them, that they might flee sin. Sometimes, it is for the sake of nurturing them, that they might learn deeper lessons. It is through bitter experiences that they will successfully learn the deeper lessons of patience, waiting, obedience to God's will, sympathy with others. Sometimes God causes His children to go through family trials, sometimes God causes them to suffer loss in their careers, and sometimes God causes them to meet with physical illness. The result of all these trials upon whom

God loves is that they be sanctified and perfected to become more like Him and more usable in His hands to His glory. And in His future glory, that they might receive more rewards. If by God's good and perfect will a Christian falls ill, do you think He will hear the prayers of the sufferer and the prayers of those who love Him? Should God answer their prayers, let me ask whether His will be for good or bad?

Sometimes a Christian has run the course of his life, on earth. Seeing his work is done, God sends him sickness to take him from his work to rest from his labours. In such circumstances, would it be in God's will for the sufferer and those who love him to pray for healing?

When Paul was in His service on earth, God wrought many miracles through him whereby many diseases were cured. But among his beloved co-workers, there were not a few whose sicknesses he could not heal. In Philippians, he tells us of Epaphroditus who "was sick nigh unto death" (Phil 2:25-28). In writing to his beloved son Timothy, he says, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim 5:23). In another epistle, he tells Timothy, "But Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" (2 Tim 4:20). According to those who stress on healing by prayer, any sickness can be healed so long as you have faith. Can they explain the aforesaid passages of Scripture?

According to these healing-by-prayer advocates, sickness is the result of sin, so when a person's sin is removed, his sickness will be healed. Moreover, Jesus not only bore our sins in His death, but also our sicknesses. Therefore, all who trust Him can be healed both in spirit and body. True, I believe sickness comes from sin, but have we never realised that death is more fearful than sickness? Is not death due to sin? A person who repents and believes in the Lord has his sin removed. Shall not death be also removed? That being the case, why is a believer still bound by death? If we say one who repents and believes in the Lord need not get sick, and when he gets sick he can be healed by prayer, then we should also say one who repents and believes in the Lord cannot die (the death of the body temporarily is called sleep). So, when a believer is breathing his last he will not die if he is prayed for. Can you believe all this kind of doctrine? No doubt, both sickness and death are from sin. Once sin is removed, both sickness and death are all removed. But the fact is that the day of the removal of sin and death has not yet come. These will all be removed not until we are taken to meet the Lord with the redemption of our body.

ON MISINTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

What the Pentecostalists preach are found in the Bible, but what is wrong is their interpretation. Dreams, visions, tongues, prostration on the ground, getting caught up to the heaven, healing by prayer have their places in the Bible, but when man misplaces them, dangers arise! A Christian meets with a difficult problem and not knowing how to go about it, he prays over it a good number of times. Then one day in this dream, he gets a clear answer which tallies with the Bible. He comes to tell me about it and I am willing to kneel with him to thank the Lord. Should a Christian meeting with grave persecution to the point of losing his fear for the Gospel and failing through fear and despair, should he at this juncture see a vision of the Lord's messenger stand by his side to comfort him so that he is greatly strengthened; when I hear such a thing, I am willing to rejoice with him in thanksgiving. Should a Gospel preacher come to a place with a language barrier but being suddenly led by the Holy Spirit he could speak to the people there in a language he could not speak before and many of his hearers are greatly moved, and should someone tell me this, I would praise the Lord, hallelujah! Should a Christian get sick and through such sickness he is greatly edified; and clearly knowing the Lord would heal him, he rejects his family doctor and any medication and is wonderfully healed, and tells me his testimony, I would be very happy to hear it. But should a believer talk of having dreamed several dreams and seen several visions and was caught up to heaven a number of times and prostrated on the ground, and how he could speak in tongues and heal sicknesses by laying of hands, but when he stands before the Church he does not speak out of the Bible (or at most a few words), taking a long time to give his testimony to pander to the curiosity of his hearers, and draw their admiration for such experiences to the neglect of many important Bible doctrines God has intended for His children, then I would rebuke such an unbiblical practice. I would warn my people against such danger.

Indeed, the Apostles had spoken in tongues and seen visions, had healed and worked miracles; but if we carefully study the Acts of the Apostles, we will not find their preaching, whether to believers or unbelievers, coupled with dreams, visions, casting out demons, and healings of the charismatics. Now, God has given twenty-one epistles by the hands of the Apostles to guide and instruct the Church. In these epistles, the Apostles taught the

Church concerning God's grace, love, mighty power, promises, Christ's completed work on our behalf, and workings through us today, the believers' position, responsibility and work and a host of doctrines the disciples should know. We never see in these epistles the Apostles talk about dreams, visions, and testimonies of the charismatic type, much less instruct believers to seek these kinds of experiences.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul has discoursed not a little on tongues. He says he has spoken with tongues more than others, but he never exhorted to seek tongues-speaking. Rather he exhorts the Church to seek the greatest and most edifying of gifts, viz., to prophesy, to preach. Finally, he says, "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor 14:39, 40). If we compare these words of Paul with what Pentecostal preachers have taught that without tongues there is not the Holy Spirit, so believers must speak in tongues, we will see a great difference between the two. Which teaching would you follow?

What sinners need most to hear is the Gospel of saving grace. What believers need most to hear are God's rebuke, teachings, promises, exhortations; and not dreams, visions, tongues which are no substitutes at all. To take lightly many important doctrines in the Bible but stress on these things not only results in depriving the spiritual food the people needs but also leads to many dangers. The flesh would take advantage of the situation to do its work. So could the Spirit of the Devil take advantage of the situation. Many who have no foundation in the Word are led far far astray. The weak are scandalised, and thereby the Name of God is put to shame. These are not my imagination. These dangers have occurred in many places already.

A CERTAIN DANGER

There is another danger linked with the Charismatic Movement, viz., many seekers for the charismatic gifts are transgressors in speech and walk by their abnormal, unruly and irresponsible conduct. During a meeting some would get up and dance, some would clap and shout, and there are others who behave most unseemly and offensively. When counselled, they would reply they are acting in deference to the Holy Spirit. Should any ask them how the Spirit would cause them to do such thing, often one of their group would cite King Saul's prophesying at Naioth and how he stripped off his

clothes and lay naked for a day and a night (1 Sam 19:18–24). They admit that to lie naked is a loss of face. The Holy Spirit could cause Saul to do such a thing. But could He not cause us to do something special? Should the Spirit cause us to lose face, to be a laughing stock, we would be willing to suffer shame for the Lord’s sake. Not too long ago, I saw how a charismatic leader used this same passage of Scripture about Saul in a magazine to prove that when the Holy Spirit fills a believer, he can behave unseemly before other people.

What a monstrous error is this! How they have misinterpreted to such an extreme this Scripture passage! Now, when Saul lay naked, he was not under the blessing of God but rather under His punishment to his shame. We should know that Saul, at this time, was long rejected for disobeying God. God had meantime anointed David king. God’s Spirit had departed from Saul and an evil spirit had come upon him. For envying David, he tried to kill him. David had to run for his life to escape Saul. At last, he came to Samuel. When Saul came to know about this, he sent men to take David. But it turned out that three men were sent to take him, three times these men prophesied by the Spirit of God when they came to Samuel. They could not lay hands on David. Finally this Saul, monster of monsters, went himself to take David, but who could imagine that before he could get his quarry, he was overturned with disgrace. Not only did the Spirit of God cause him to speak but also meet with what the three messengers did not experience—for a day and a night he lay down naked. Not only should we not seek Saul’s experience, but we rather flee from it. But, there was one experience in Saul we should seek after and that happened when the prophet Samuel anointed him king, and Samuel said,

After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place . . . And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man (1 Sam 10:5, 6).

Take note that after Saul was anointed and was moved to prophesy, he received “a new heart”; he became a new man. After Saul was rejected and was moved to prophesy, he “lay down naked all that day and all that night.” We should seek his first experience and flee from his second experience. The

former was blessing; the latter curse. The former was glory and the latter disgrace. Who would imagine that among these seekers of charismatic gifts there should arise those who regard those fearful and shameful experiences for a pattern? To be teachers of the Bible without understanding is dangerous business.

Let us discuss the matter of dancing. Those seekers of charismatic gifts would often get up and dance during meetings. Sometimes only a few would get up and dance, sometimes a great many. Although this sort of dance is not like that of ballroom dancing when men and women hold one another, but because what people generally talk of dancing connotes that lustful western type, so when “dancing” is mentioned, it invariably arouses an adverse reaction of the heart. If, indeed, dancing during a Church service brings great benefit, we need not worry about unbelievers’ misunderstanding about us. We should not discard the benefit of dancing. But facts tell us that such dancing dissipates the spirit of the meetings and stirs up reviling from outsiders. Such dancing brings no benefit whatsoever.

The charismatic gifts seekers say that dancing is the work of the Holy Spirit, but if we study the Word, we will find no such dancing at all as coming from the Holy Spirit. No, never! The charismatic gifts seekers say David danced before the ark. No doubt, David did dance before the ark, but the dance did not come from the Holy Spirit, but from his happiness. Let us read the Bible passage:

And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet (2 Sam 6:12–15).

Is there one word about the Holy Spirit causing David to dance? No. David’s dance was automatic. David danced before the ark because he was overjoyed beyond measure as he had the honour of welcoming the ark of God to his city. He danced as he did because dancing was part of Israel’s culture. When the Israelites had any happy occasion, they would make music

and dance to celebrate. Let us cite other instances of dancing recorded in the Bible.

1. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances (Exod 15:19, 20).

2. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter (Judg 11:34).

3. Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah. Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin (Judg 21:19–21).

4. And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands (1 Sam 18:6, 7).

After reading these records, we know that Israel had from old times the practice of dancing, but that dancing was not like that of men and women embracing one another, a demoralising practice of Europe and America. Their dance and music was to celebrate an auspicious and a happy occasion. David danced before the ark because he was overjoyed to have the honour of welcoming the ark to his own city. The Bible records so very clearly, but charismatic gifts seekers would cite David's dance before the ark to show their dancing to be a work of the Holy Spirit. What an arbitrary twist!

Should someone ask, from whence are come these wonderful experiences of the charismatic gifts seekers? To such a question, I cannot give a blanket answer. I consider these various wonderful experiences to come from four sources. First, they are from God. But an experience from God must tally with the teachings of the Bible.

Second, they are from the evil spirit. The evil spirit can counterfeit the Holy Spirit as the Bible says, "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). Now, those experiences coming through the evil spirit resemble in some measure the experiences that come from the Holy Spirit. But if we study carefully we can observe the differences between them. This is just like comparing a counterfeit bank note with a genuine one and comparing counterfeit goods with genuine goods, where there are the similarities and dissimilarities.

Third, these experiences are from the flesh. I consider those that are from the flesh most numerous. These stem from erroneous teachings and directions. Many seek the Holy Spirit not according to the teachings of the Bible, so they end up with many notions of the flesh. Thus, when they think they have the Spirit, they in fact are in the flesh.

The fourth category belongs to the pretenders. Some people are influenced by their friends and colleagues, who are under these special influences, but they have not; and seeing themselves being looked down upon as lukewarm or having sin unconfessed, they feel a sense of intolerance. So, for the sake of following the crowd, they chime in with dreams and visions and even tongues. This class of people is most despicable. I would not say more.

Thus, should we strike at those who seek charismatic gifts? By no means. Though within the charismatics there are those who follow blindly out of curiosity, there are also those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. And I believe there are others who love the Lord and have received God's grace. These are our brethren and we love them. Unfortunately, they have landed on erroneous doctrines and dangerous phenomena by their bias for these strange experiences. Because we love them, it behoves us to point very frankly these portions of their errors. It is hoped that those believers who get entangled by these errors might take precaution, lest they fall into their rut.

I have another word of importance. There are not a few Christians and preachers today who speak bad of charismaticism and attack those who seek gifts, in a spirit of superiority. But under close examination, they can little measure to those they criticise. On many an occasion, it is due to these critics that many have strayed into the paths of the charismatics. Though critics do not seek the gifts, in fact, they are void of (spiritual) life. They are Christians (?); they are preachers (?). The fact is they have never repented, nor trusted the Lord. When they first joined the Church they came with certain objectives, or simply joined blindly to become Christians. Their minds store up a little Bible knowledge. They become Church leaders, preachers and pastors, not to serve God, to save souls, but “to eat rice” and for vain glory, or for some other base objective. Because such people hold office in the Church the congregation does not receive proper nurture. They imbibe little of spiritual food. Now, when there comes a preacher who speaks out of some portion of Scripture zealously, these sheep that are on a starvation diet and have no energy or knowledge of discernment naturally vie with one another to take it in. I hear of how many Christians leave their churches to join the charismatics when they come into a certain neighbourhood. So their pastor warns them from taking their poison. Their reply to the pastor is, “Pastor, though poison is bad, at least we have poison here. Where you are, we don’t even have poison! To eat poison is better than being starved to death?” “To quench the thirst with poisonous wine” (according to a Chinese proverb) no doubt is foolishness. While these people are dying of thirst, those who were responsible for water supply did not have even a drop. Could these responsible ones face up to chide those drinking poisonous wine to quench their thirst? Let me ask whose sin is it when death comes on those who drink poisonous wine? Let me plead earnestly with these people not to criticise the charismatic gifts seekers, for you have no qualification to criticise them. Moreover you criticise wrongfully. I urge you first to consider the Lord Jesus’s teaching, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Matt 7:3–5). Repent now quickly and thoroughly of your sins and receive Christ sincerely into your heart. First receive the life, first be humbled and have a docile heart to receive instruction from the Bible by

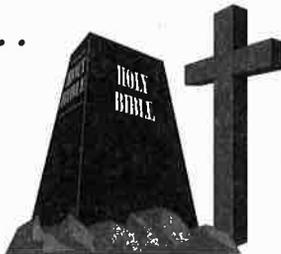
giving time to careful research. Then, with a loyal heart to serve God, go and preach the Gospel, go feed the sheep with the Word of God. Only then can you have the capacity to correct the faults of others, to help others get out of their lost wanderings. Thus, when you correct the faults of others you must first make careful study what their errors are. Never, never listen carelessly to hearsay and make false accusations. Such action is ignorance par excellence.

CONCLUSION

Finally, there is a big number of Christians who lack this most important thing. They lack the experience of repentance and salvation! They lack the fundamental faith, the life of Christ, the knowledge of the Truth, a fervent loving heart, the strength of the heavenlies. Many Christians have seen this lack and felt the need to seek them. But they have not found the True Way and thus fall by the wayside. They land in many errors and dangers. If leaders of the Church, pastors and all consecrated workers clearly understand the meaning of the saving grace and reject all evil and unrighteousness, and offer themselves into God's hands for His use, and by receiving the heavenly gifts of wisdom and strength in the labour of God, preaching the true Gospel and giving spiritual food to all who need it to fill up the needs of the needy, then there will not arise these various dangers.

The Church today needs revival, a revival that answers fully to the Bible. But the greatest obstructions to revival are those who do not fully believe God's Word, nor are they repentant, nor are Church leaders and preachers fully faithful in the Lord's work. I would urge these to flee those kinds of erroneous doctrine and to repent quickly. Let them serve faithfully as they shepherd the flocks of God.

Hold Fast . . .



. . . Seek no other!

WANG MING TAO



&

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